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ABSTRACT

In the spring of 1971, top priority was placed on the systematic planning and evaluation of Federal programs operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The needs assessment was viewed as the process of ascertaining the decision areas of concern. This was accomplished by establishing potential educational goals or objectives, determining which of these were of highest priority, and then determining the extent to which the existing educational program met these objectives. Discrepancies between intended outcomes and actual performance outcomes represented the area of needs. A needs assessment model was developed by the BIA's Division of Evaluation and Program Review. This model included the following steps: determination of goals by Indian people, selection of goals, selection of appropriate objectives by the school, assessment of learner behavior on selected objectives, and plans and programming to meet the needs. This report discusses the design, accomplishments during Fiscal Year 1972, and administrative considerations. (NQ)

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Educational Needs Assessment

in the

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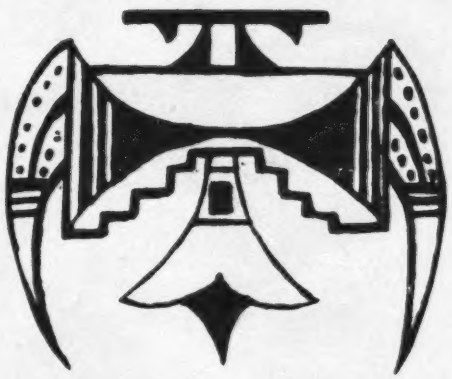

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Research and Evaluation Report No. 9

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

IN THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

Bureau of Indian Affairs
Office of Education Programs
Indian Education Resources Center
Division of Evaluation and Program Review
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June, 1972

CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	i
INTRODUCTION	1
DEFINITIONS	3
PART I FISCAL YEAR 1972	8
PART II ACCOMPLISHMENTS	12
PART III ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS	18

CHARTS

	Page
FIGURE 1	5
2	10
3	11
4	20
5	21

PREFACE

What educational purposes should the school seek to attain? This question, requiring very serious value judgements, is at the heart of decision-making in education, according to the most widely accepted rationale for curriculum building. It is generally agreed that three major sources must be consulted in attempting to answer it appropriately: The society, the learner, and the subject matter. Any effort to substantively improve the quality of educational programs for American Indians, in addressing itself to those judgments, must necessarily become involved with aspects of language and culture as they are either included in the educational program, or as they materially effect what is selected or rejected as part of a curriculum. The "Society" must be considered as that combination of social, economic, and cultural circumstances from which the given school population derives, not those in some view of the "Average American Town". The "learner" as a data source for curriculum building in Indian education likewise must be "this particular learner", an Indian child born and reared in a unique socio-cultural-linguistic setting, and these learners and societies must be consulted first when seeking to make educational decisions. Only then will it be worthwhile to discuss program content in terms of subject matter.

Ideologically, and theoretically, these principles are easy to accept, but methodologically, they are most difficult to accomplish. American Indians' present day life styles and socio-cultural-linguistic circum-

stances are extremely varied. They include remote, isolated, non-English speaking peoples: rural, farming-ranching, English speaking and non-English speaking populations; urban and suburban skilled, semi-skilled, and professional people; and many more. How can we build better programs to meet such wide-ranging educational needs?

The avowed national policy in all matters involving the lives and welfare of American Indians, including the education of their children, has been designated as one of serious promotion of self determination. If vigorously pursued, this policy would reverse long-held notions about the ends to be sought by and for the individual within his own sub-culture or within the larger society. Value judgments must be systematically ascertained, and goals and objectives deriving from them must be the focus of rigorous and conscientious examination.

But how shall we approach a task which is overwhelming in its complexity even to contemplate? How can we effectively consult these diverse societies and learners to arrive at better answers to the all important question, "What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?"

The task to be undertaken is that of ascertaining educational needs, and needs assessment is a component of the process of evaluation. In 1972 the Division of Evaluation of the Office of Education Programs, Bureau of Indian Affairs, developed a design for the Bureau-wide accom-

plishment of educational needs assessment, and a number of important steps were taken toward implementation of that design.

The following report presents that design. It also includes rationale for increasing the effectiveness of Bureau-wide educational decision-making through increased evaluation competencies and appropriate use of information.

BIA EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has had the responsibility for providing education programs for American Indians, Aleuts, and Eskimos for over 100 years. The Office of Education Programs within the Bureau has responded to changing political climate, varying sociological-anthropological theory, and cycles of societal interest with efforts to assess and meet the educational needs of Native Americans. Many of those efforts, recorded in considerable detail in Governmental Archives, would be considered objective studies and of high quality even by today's criteria, yet they would not be useful for today's program planning needs. Several elements have not heretofore been of concern in the determination of needs and the systematic planning of programs to meet those needs:

(a) The specificity of language used today in development of defensible educational goals and objectives has only recently come into general use in American education and in Bureau education programs.

(b) The population to be served was often viewed as homogeneous and quite monolithic, whereas it is really extremely varied socio-culturally, linguistically, geographically, and economically. Any model for adequately assessing educational needs among Native Americans must be able to accomodate those diversities.

(c) The present Federal Administration has proclaimed a policy of promoting self-determination on the part of Native Americans wherever they may live within the United States. Whereas others (non-Native Americans) have historically decided matters of educational policy and programs for them, the current focus will require that Native Americans themselves be central to the decision-making.

(d) There are many avenues through which educational services are provided to Native Americans. Special programs represent historical efforts to respond effectively to special educational needs, among which are the Johnson O'Malley program, reservation boarding schools, and the off-reservation boarding schools. In addition to the diversity of population to be served, we have diversity among existing programs provided for that population. In view of this diversity, the task then, of ascertaining the educational needs of American Indians and other Native Americans is extremely complex. Needs assessment strategies must accomodate that complexity.

The responsibility for designing and implementing a Bureau-wide needs assessment rests with the Division of Evaluation and Program Review of the Office of Education Programs. This is considered to be a task of the highest priority for Indian Education.

DEFINITIONS

(a) "Educational needs assessment is a technique for identifying those educational objectives which most need to be accomplished in a given instructional situation."

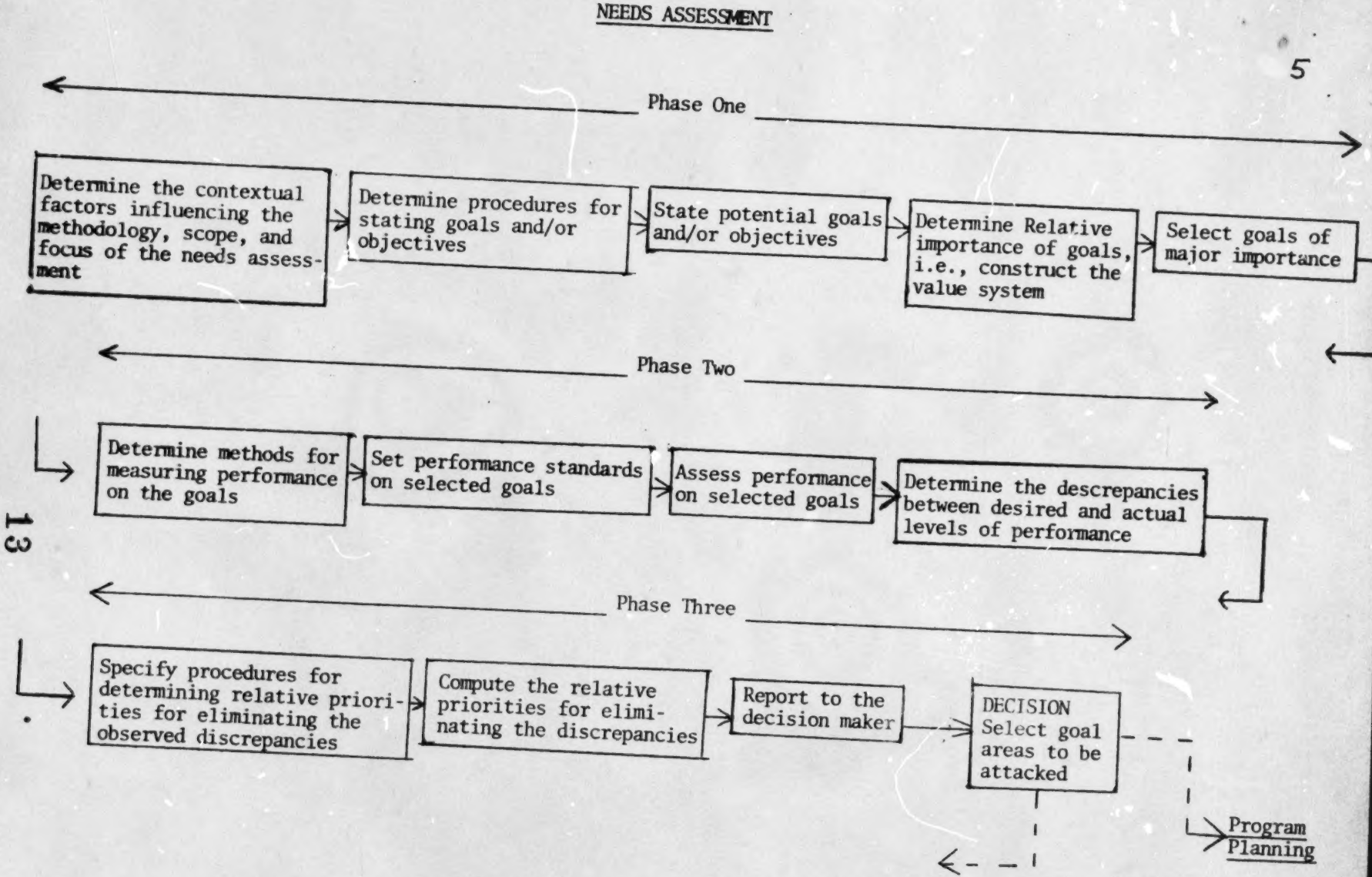
(b) "Needs assessment involves stating potential educational goals or objectives (preferably in terms of student performance rather than instructional processes), deciding which of these are of highest priority, and determining how well the existing educational program is meeting these objectives". (The Center's Changing Evaluation Model, Center for the Study of Evaluation, Klein, et.al) 1971.

(c) "The first role of educational evaluation occurs with respect to what is increasingly referred to these days as <u>needs assessment</u>. In the needs assessment operation, an educator attempts to identify the goals toward which an educational system ought to be directed. Another way of putting it is that the educator is deciding on the objectives for the educational system. . . . decisions regarding what educational objectives ought to be pursued can emerge as a consequence of comparing current learner performance data with preferences regarding what that performance <u>should</u> be."

Definitions (b) and (c) make specific reference to the role of the needs assessment in selecting the goals of preference for an educational system, then proceeding to ascertain the degree to which existing programs

are producing the desired student behavior as outcomes. Definition (a) assumes the prior existence (determination) of system goals and instructional objectives, and calls for an assessment of actual learner performance in comparison with the preferred or desired performance.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs' effort in the conduct of an educational needs assessment is at the "Goal Selection" stage, and efforts during FY 1972 and FY 1973 may be said to correspond to the first five steps of the Needs Assessment Model developed by Klein, et.al., at the Center for the Study of Evaluation. (See Figure I).


NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Phase One
Determine the contextual factors influencing the methodology, scope, and focus of the needs assessment
Determine procedures for stating goals and/or objectives
State potential goals and/or objectives
Determine Relative importance of goals, i.e., construct the value system
Select goals of major importance
Phase Two
Determine methods for measuring performance on the goals
Set performance standards on selected goals
Assess performance on selected goals
Determine the descrepancies between desired and actual levels of performance
Phase Three
Specify procedures for determining relative priorities for eliminating the observed discrepancies
Compute the relative priorities for eliminating the discrepancies
Report to the decision maker
DECISION
Select goal areas to be attacked
Program Planning

* CSE Evaluation Framework

FIGURE 1

It is planned that in FY 73, the continuation of Project ORBS will constitute the central effort to:

(a) develop and refine the model for determining "Goals" at the remaining ORBS Secondary Schools.

(b) Train staff from BIA Area Offices and schools to assist in implementation of the model at those ORBS schools.

(c) Adapt the model to the elementary level.

(d) Produce goal data for all ORBS.

(e) Form the basis on which goal-selection will be able to proceed at all Bureau schools (200).

Part Two of Phase One of the needs assessment will begin during FY 73 at Chilocco and Sherman Indian High Schools where goal selection instrumentation was developed during the past school year. This will involve Area, Agency, and school level personnel, under coordination and training of the Division of Evaluation in:

(a) Selection and/or development of subgoals based on goals determined in Part One of Phase One.

(b) Preparation of objectives reflecting the subgoals.

(c) Preparation of instructional level behavioral objectives and accompanying criterion items.

The Division of Evaluation of the BIA has utilized several training programs during FY 72 in preparing Area personnel and others (e.g., school board members) to assist in development of instruments for determination of goals. Among those are programs developed by VIMCET Associates under

Professor W. Popham of UCLA. These programs will continue to provide important assistance during Phase One of the Needs Assessment Program.

The Division will also recommend that subgoals may be generated most efficiently by utilizing already prepared hierarchies of goals and objectives such as that developed by the Center for the Study of Evaluation at UCLA. The magnitude of the tasks involved in a Bureau-wide needs assessment requires that wherever possible, existing data banks be utilized rather than attempting to re-invent the wheel. In this regard, it will also be recommended that existing collections of measurable objectives be used as data basis for selecting specific program objectives. One such collection is that prepared by the Instructional Objectives Exchange (IOX) of Los Angeles, which is available to BIA educators from our library.

The work will be performed under the direction of the professional staff of the Division of Evaluation and Program Review and may, from time to time, involve the services of evaluation consultants from universities and colleges, regional laboratories, state departments of education, and private consultant firms.

I. FISCAL YEAR 1972

Planning for the development of educational needs assessment by the Office of Education Programs of the Bureau of Indian Affairs began in the Spring of 1971. The Director of Education Programs announced to his staff at that time that he was placing top priority on systematic planning and evaluation of Federal programs of the BIA. As a result of this decision several activities were planned and implemented during FY 1972 as part of an overall effort to more adequately assess the educational needs of Indian learners. The pilot effort was directed toward the off-reservation boarding schools operated by the BIA. This activity came to be referred to as Project ORBS and focused initially on the secondary level boarding schools. This project will constitute most of Phase One of the projected needs assessment.

Authorization was also given to proceed with planning of a needs assessment at the elementary level for Bureau boarding schools, but time and staffing constraints have not permitted the undertaking as yet.

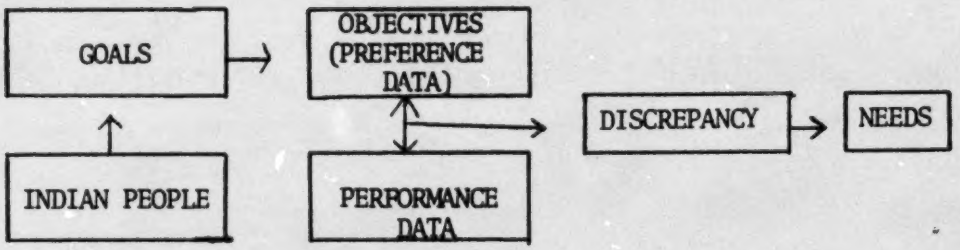
Another major effort during FY 1972 which is related to the conduct of educational needs assessment in the BIA is involved with the question of testing. It was felt that, while testing is an evaluative process, and should yield important data relative to assessing educational needs, the procedures and policies relative to testing of Indian students had, over time, become so confused in purpose as to be virtually useless for educational planning. At the same time, a lack of explicit behavioral goals for instruction left no defensible basis on which to select and

administer tests, or direct effective use of data. As a result, a task force on testing (TFT) was established for the purpose of determining defensible testing policies. The comprehensive policy on testing developed by the TFT reinforces the approach to needs assessment outlined in this paper. Student, parent and community are to be involved and consulted, and criterion referenced testing with immediate feedback (as opposed to norm-reference, standardized testing) are to be basic principles of the policy. The policies will be published and released shortly.

As currently conceived by the Education Office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, needs assessment is a function of evaluation. Evaluation totally is viewed as the process of ascertaining the decision areas of concern, selecting appropriate information, collecting and analyzing information in order to report summary data useful to decision-makers in selecting among alternatives. (Alkin, 1970).

The needs assessment is viewed as one of several basic features or phases of evaluation, and is concerned with the first aspect of the definition stated above: that is, ascertaining the decision areas of concern. This is accomplished principally by obtaining statements of potential educational goals or objectives, determining which of these are of highest priority, then judging the extent to which the existing educational program is meeting these objectives. The discrepancy between intended (desired, hoped for) outcomes and actual performance outcomes represents the area of needs. This approach to educational needs assessment in the BIA is illustrated in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

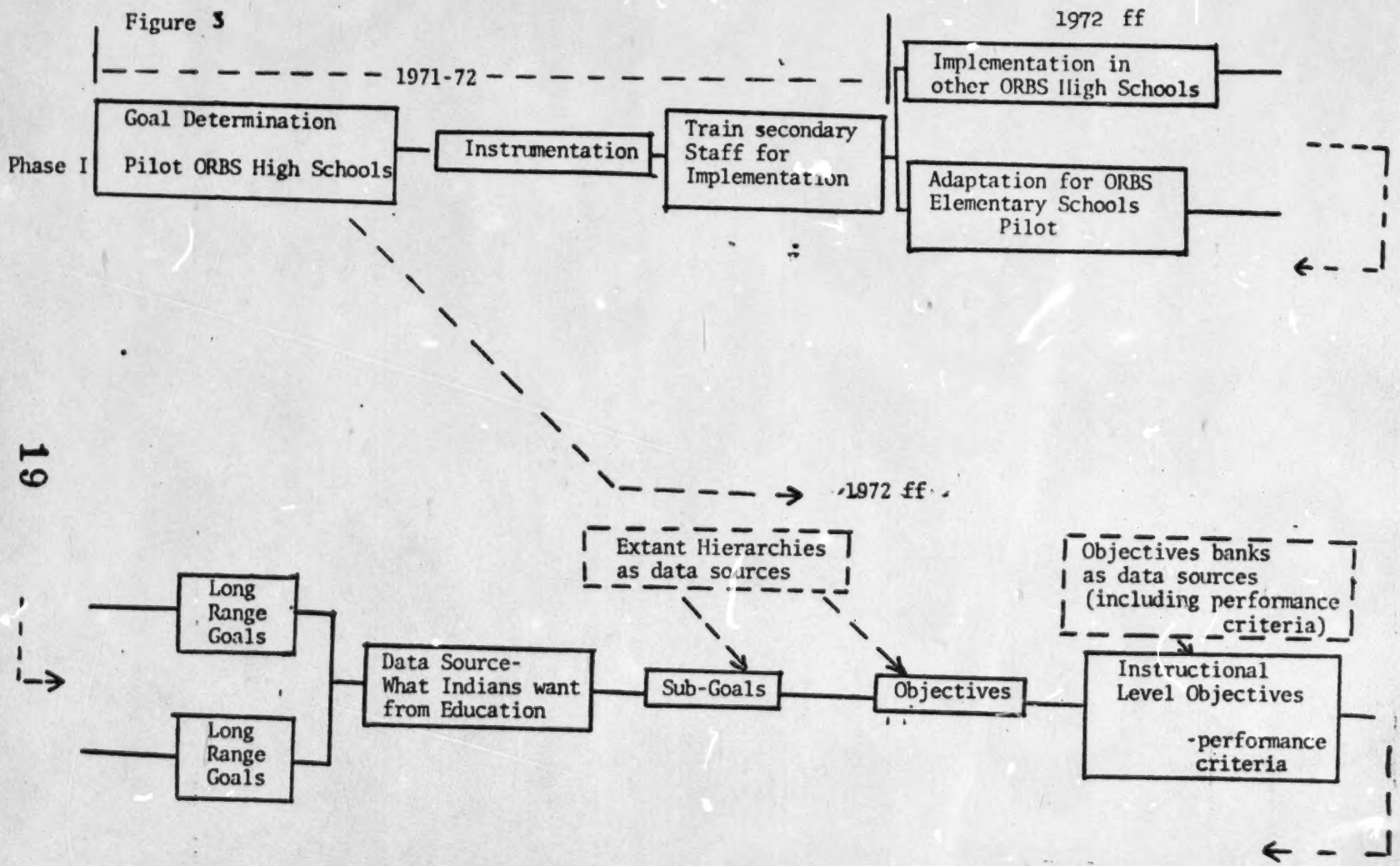


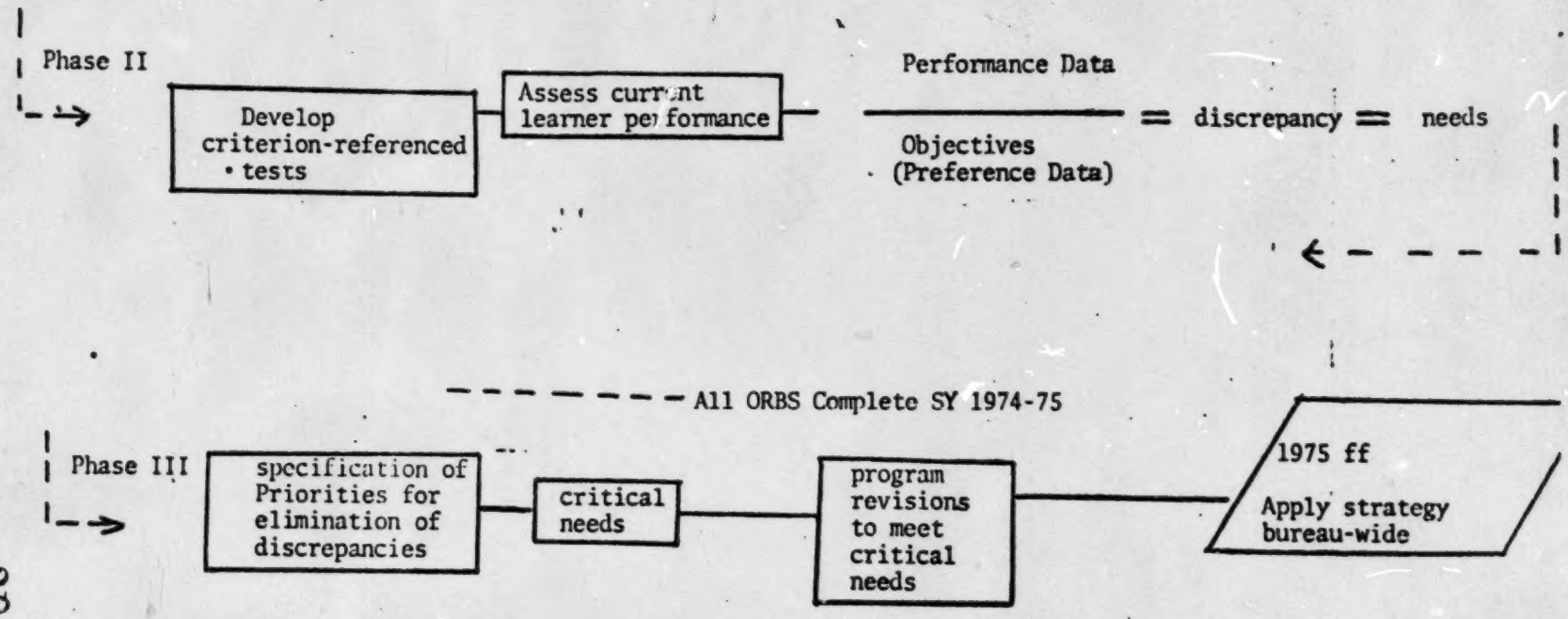
As previously stated, emphasis during FY 1972 in undertaking the development of an educational needs assessment within the BIA has been at the secondary level, and has involved two off-reservation boarding schools-Sherman, Riverside, California and Chilocco at Chilocco, Oklahoma.

The BIA operates some 23 such schools, defined as schools located beyond the boundaries of established Indian Reservations, and which provide educational programs and boarding facilities for Indian students at either the secondary or the elementary level.

In deciding to first undertake the needs assessment of ORBS High Schools, it was agreed that planning for needs assessment at the elementary level would occur during implementation of the secondary model. This will still be part of Phase One--Determination of Goals. That is, following the 1971-72 development of instrumentation at the two high schools, the resulting model will be utilized in the remaining ORBS High Schools during the 72-73 school year, and adaptation to elementary level will occur concurrently. The approach relative to implementation of needs assessment, is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3


1971-72
1972 ff
Implementation in other ORBS High Schools
Phase I
Goal Determination
Pilot ORBS High Schools
Instrumentation
Train secondary Staff for Implementation
Adaptation for ORBS Elementary Schools Pilot
1972 ff
Extant Hierarchies as data sources
Objectives banks as data sources (including performance criteria)
Long Range Goals
Long Range Goals
Data Source- What Indians want from Education
Sub-Goals
Objectives
Instructional Level Objectives
-performance criteria


Phase II
Develop criterion-referenced tests
Assess current learner performance
Performance Data
Objectives (Preference Data)
discrepancy
needs
All ORBS Complete SY 1974-75
Phase III
specification of Priorities for elimination of discrepancies
critical needs
program revisions to meet critical needs
1975 ff
Apply strategy bureau-wide

II. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Needs assessment is central to what the BIA has termed the off-reservation boarding school project (ORBS). The principle objective of this project is to develop long-range educational goals and objectives stated in terms of what the Indian people want and/or expect.

During the summer and fall of 1971, a Request for Proposals was prepared by the Office of Education Programs and sent to a number of all-Indian education organizations.

The contract was ultimately awarded to the National Indian Training and Research Center (NITRIC) of Tempe, Arizona; an all-Indian, non-profit organization. Part of the instrumentation for ORBS is being developed by NITRIC. The NITRIC part of the instrumentation development was conducted at Sherman Indian High School, Riverside, California, and the first oral report by the contractor was presented to Central Office and school personnel on Thursday, June 15.

The second major effort during FY 1972 in the development of instrumentation for ORBS was developed at Chilocco Indian School, during the period February 16 - April 7, 1972. This project was called the Chilocco Survey and its principle objective was also to produce a set of long-range goals for Chilocco Indian School.

The approach to the Chilocco Survey was to involve local people on a survey team in order to make the undertaking a cooperative one. A

proposal to that effect was drawn up and presented to the Chilocco School Board. The Board approved the proposal and the survey was undertaken.

The first task of the survey team in the effort to determine priorities in long-range goals was the development of a questionnaire. The questionnaire represents one technique for obtaining the views of a sampling of Indians on educational goals. This is the first time in the history of the BIA that this approach to program development has been employed, and parents, students and staff opinions were sought and obtained.

A planning conference was held in Albuquerque during the week of June 5-9 relative to Project ORBS. People from both the Sherman and Chilocco School activities were involved in assessing the progress of their separate efforts toward accomplishing goals selection. Instrumentation from both projects was reviewed, and recommendations developed for next steps to be taken in preparation for the coming school year 1972-73, during which goals selection will be conducted at the remaining off-reservation boarding schools.

The planning conference had the following objectives:

(1) Refine and adopt instrumentation relative to ORBS.

(2) Develop procedures for implementing ORBS at each participating school.

(3) Develop an inservice training workshop for ORBS personnel who will assume major responsibility for conducting the project at each school.

The inservice training refers to an intensive workshop to be conducted by the Division of Evaluation and Program Review in late July, 1972.

This will be explained under Section III. The workshop represents the first major component of the Bureau-wide goals selection activity scheduled for FY 1973. This activity is shown in Figure 3 and carries the caption, "Train Secondary Staff for Implementation".

The continuation time-frame for Phase One during FY 73 is shown in Figure 3, as well as the longer range projection into Phase Two assessing performance on subgoals and objectives. It should be noted that the projection includes the adaptation and development of a goals selection model for the elementary level. The needs assessment cycle is represented in the model in Figure 4.

In summary, the BIA is in the process of going to Indian people and asking them to determine goals which will guide the education of their children. These goals will be the basis from which Bureau educators will develop specific educational objectives (see Figure 3). A behavioral comparison of actual learner performance with desired learner behavioral outcomes as represented by these goals and objectives will constitute the Bureau-wide needs assessment strategy.

The needs assessment model (Figure 4) represents the approach to be followed in the assessment of BIA Education. The following discussion will describe each step in the model in more detail.

(1) Determination of Goals by Indian People

This is the foundation of the total system. Goals must represent the desires of Indian peoples, and progress toward achieving the goals is to be reported back to them. This requires that BIA educators develop new methods and expand existing methods of communicating with Indian communities. The model requires that Indian people know what they want of the school and that the school in return keep them informed regarding how well Indian children are doing in achieving the goals. It should be noted that , where feasible, probably in all high schools, the students are to be brought in on the process. The model also calls for the educator to be a true professional. His job is to design and implement programs that will achieve the goals selected or determined by Indian peoples.

(2) Selection of Goals

This professional task calls for development of a range of possible goals and trying them out on Indian people in an openended manner. That is, many goals will be presented to people from which they may select preferences. They will be invited to suggest items not included in the inquiry. Ultimately, a data bank of goals will be assembled and used as a basis for needs assessment at every level of operation.

(3) The flow of program direction and control will start with Indian people, who, through various techniques of communication, will tell professional educators what the long-range goals of the program should be. Those goals that are considered most important, according to an Indian constitutency, will be used as bases for development of subgoals. This will be accomplished through the use of prepared hierarchies, wherever possible, by the professional school staff.

(4) School Selects Appropriate Objectives

It is the task of the professional educator at the school level to take the Indian-determined goals and the subgoals and translate them to more specific instructional objectives. Instructional objectives at the local level must relate to the general, global goals which have been determined by Indian people. Objectives banks as data sources will be recommended for accomplishment of this task. Criterion items included with the objectives will form the basis for criterion referenced evaluation.

(5) Assess Learner Behavior on Selected Objectives

A pattern of matrix sampling will be used to determine the present learner capabilities in the several domains. It is anticipated that efforts will focus initially on cognitive objectives in grades nine through 12. The actual learner performance on the selected objectives be compared with the

desired or preferred level of performance specified with the objective. A negative discrepancy between the two reflects a learner need. From a tabulation of the several performance areas critical needs will be ascertained.

(6) Plan to Meet Needs

Identified critical needs provide valid data for educational decision-making in planning to achieve defensible goals-objectives. If the steps in the cycle have been carefully followed, professional educators should have an abundance of valid data to use in this process, and should likewise have persuasive information regarding funds needed to implement program modifications, and innovations, (e.g., Title III).

(7) Programming to Meet Needs

It is expected that, provided with the information derived from needs assessment, administrators and their staffs will make program modifications that will be geared to the meeting of the critical needs as determined.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

The Bureau of Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior is made up of a number of Divisions which provide a wide range of services to Native Americans. The largest of these is the Office of Education Programs, which is organized as shown in Figure 5.

Each Area Office has among its varied service divisions, an Assistant Area Director for Education, and a staff of education personnel to provide assistance and services to Agencies within the Area. In turn, the Agencies administer individual schools.

In preparing the educational needs assessment design, personnel from each level, including the school, have been involved in all activities to date. Over 50 were involved as participants in the July workshop. In addition, school board members and students will participate (and have participated) as team members.

The Evaluation Division of the Central Office headquartered in Albuquerque will coordinate all aspects of the Bureau-wide needs assessment, and staff members of other Central Office Divisions will assist from time to time. In general, existing staff at the Area and Agency levels will fill the major staffing needs.

Additionally, the data analysis and storage will be handled by the Education Programs staff of the Indian Affairs Data Center, located in Albuquerque. This is an especially critical aspect of the projec-

tion, since the varied and widely scattered populations to be assessed will generate a great deal of data.

Finally, the work to be accomplished will, for the most part, be performed within the regular funding of the several administrative entities of the Office of Education Programs. From time to time, as special situations and needs arise, the Evaluation Division will seek special funding for project components.

Figure 4 BIA NEEDS ASSESSMENT CYCLE

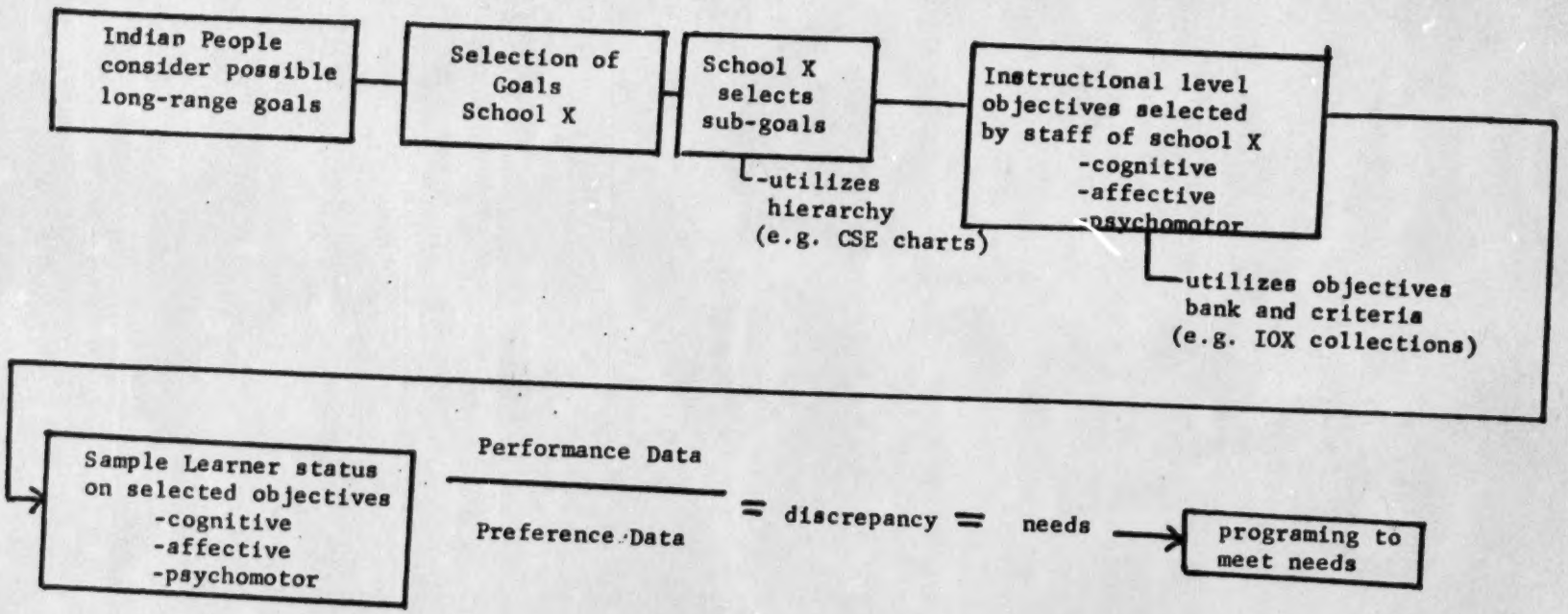
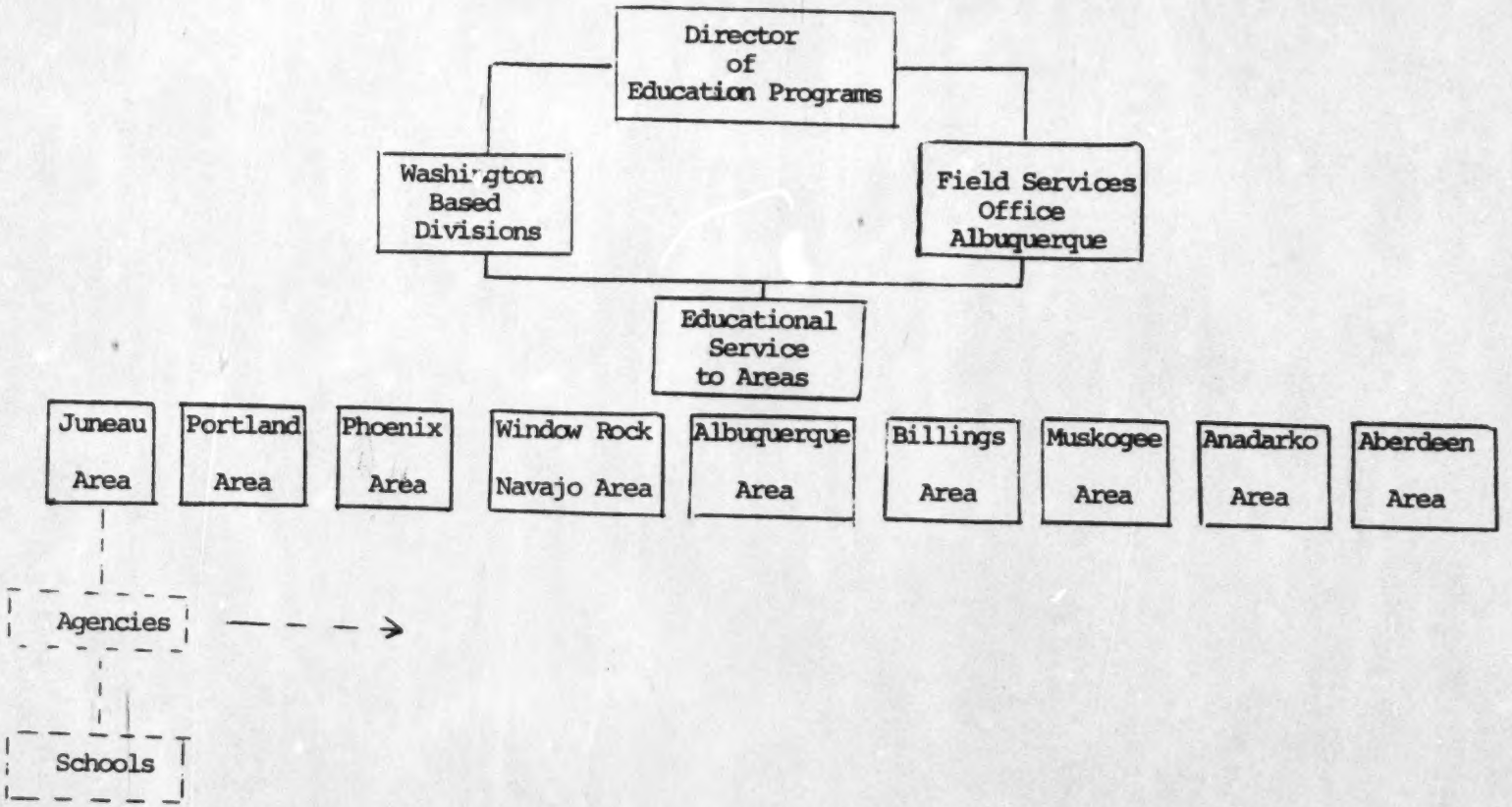


FIGURE FIVE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Billings Area
Muskogee Area
Anadarko Area
Aberdeen Area
Agencies
Schools

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION REPORT SERIES

The Education activity of the BIA has always produced a large and steady number of very useful reports. In recent time, there seems to be an increasingly larger number of high quality reports. Too, throughout the years, there has not been an attempt to organize or arrange the reports in such a manner that they become a useful and systematic body of information. In order to provide a systematic arrangement of high quality reports so that they may be made available to BIA educators, a Research and Evaluation Report Series has been established by the Indian Education Resources Center (IERC), Division of Evaluation and Program Review.

The general objectives of the Series are to:

(1) Provide a systematic arrangement of education reports.
(2) Identify those reports considered to be high in quality.
(3) Make pertinent data available to BIA educators and when possible, to educators outside the BIA.
(4) Make it possible for professional educators involved in research pertinent to the schooling of Indian children to share their experiences with a greater audience.
(5) Assist in the overall evaluation process of the BIA Education activity.